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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000063

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UN-COMMONWEALTH MEDIATORS SEEK REASSURANCE

REF: A) SUVA 31 B) SUVA 53

Classified By: Ambassador C. Steven McGann for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (SBU) A joint UN-Commonwealth team has visited Suva seeking reassurance from Fiji's interim government (IG) that it still wants the UN and Commonwealth to mediate Fiji's political crisis through a &President's Political Dialogue Forum8 (PPDF). Interim Prime Minister Bainimarama has refused to meet with the team members, and five days into their visit they have received no indication that the IG is eager for the process to begin. The team envisions a time-bound six month process that would begin as soon as the IG accepts the proposed mediator, Sir Rabbie Namaliu from Papua New Guinea (PNG). Notably, the IG has neither made a decision on, nor shared with the UN-Commonwealth team, the proposed terms of reference for the PPDF submitted by Special Rapporteurs Robin Nair and Sitiveni Halapua in December. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) A joint UN-Commonwealth team briefed the diplomatic community February 12 on the first five days of its week-long visit to Fiji. The visit is the second by joint UN-Commonwealth teams in response to an early 2008 request by the IG that the UN and Commonwealth assist Fiji in resolving the current political crisis. The first visit came in December 2008 for the purpose of assessing whether the UN and Commonwealth might serve a useful purpose. Following that visit, the UN and Commonwealth informed the IG of their decision to jointly accept the role as mediator. This second, follow-up visit was originally scheduled for late January, but postponed at IG request, ostensibly because of recent flooding.

Interim Government Ambiguity

¶3. (SBU) UN representative Mari Yamashita said the team's visit hoped to: (1) confirm basic principles underlying the engagement; (2) confirm that political consensus regarding the usefulness of joint mediation still exists; (3) confirm that the IG still wants UN-Commonwealth mediation; and (4) enable the team to assess the costs of the endeavor for approaching potential donors. Notably, the team reported that they had not yet received any confirmation from the IG that it wants the mediation to proceed. Bainimarama was unwilling to meet with the team, but it met with Permanent Secretary Parmesh Chand and was scheduled to meet interim

Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum on February 13. The team was surprised that after five days in Fiji meeting with various government officials it had yet to receive any clear indication from the IG that it would allow the mediation to proceed, Yamashita said.

¶4. (SBU) Notably, the IG has not shared with the joint team the report submitted to the IG by Special Rapporteurs Robin Nair and Sitiveni Halapua in December, proposing terms of reference for the President's Political Dialogue Forum. Upon IG acceptance of the proposed TORs, the report envisions a second Political Parties Dialogue at which the various political parties would agree on the TORs as the basis for the upcoming PPDF. Despite having the report for nearly two months, the IG has yet to formulate a response, Parmesh Chand told the team. Interim AG Sayed-Khaiyum has twice announced that a PPD would take place before the end of February, but no dates have thus far been announced. These developments leave uncertain the relationship between the UN-Commonwealth mediation and the PPDF (which most assumed would be the same thing), as well as how this process will interface with the Pacific Islands Forum's May 1 deadline for a roadmap to elections.

Logistics

¶5. (SBU) The team envisions a time-bound six months process led by a joint mediator, supported by two senior advisors and a secretariat based in Suva. They have proposed PNG's Sir Rabbie Namaliu as mediator to the IG. The team's visit is

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designed in part to enable the UN and Commonwealth to provide potential donors a clear picture of what they are being asked to fund. Fundraising will be done by letter in New York and London, probably by the end of February. The team envisions a two-track process. Track one will include the IG and political parties, who will meet in plenary sessions and, if needed, smaller working groups to discuss specific topics. Track two will involve a mechanism by which civil society can have input into the process. The mediation will begin if and when Bainimarama accepts the appointment of the mediator. The team believes the process can be completed within six months. There is a strong consensus among all participants (except for the IG, which has remained silent) that the process be sustained and intensive.

Comment

¶6. (C) Comment: Post assesses that we are moving into a period of seismic shifts in Fijian politics. Post's End-of-Day and other reporting have kept Washington updated as the Fijians inch toward a political solution that goes beyond dates for elections or dialogue. The Pacific Islands Forum and the UN-Commonwealth are seeking to achieve many of the same purposes but are out of sync with each other on timing and, of course, pulling the IG faster than it wants to move. Rumors abound that the IG soon plans to abrogate Fiji's constitution. If that happens, part of the motivation behind the move might be to foreclose the dialogue process altogether with a fait accompli. Whether it chooses this route or not, the IG will soon need to tip its hand on its plans for Fiji's future. End Comment.

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